

VZCZCXYZ0001
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHKT #0945/01 2871150
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 141150Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0899
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3282
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7489
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 2825
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 5530

UNCLAS KATHMANDU 000945

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/INS, PM/CBM, PM/PRO

STATE FOR SCA/PPD, PA/RRU

E.O. 12958 N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [OPRC](#) [NP](#)

SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION: RESPONSE OF NEPALI PRESS
TO OBAMA'S NOBEL PRIZE

¶1. SUMMARY: Nepali media commentators expressed surprise at the Nobel Committee's decision to award President Obama with the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize. Reactions were mixed, with some commentators claiming that Obama's actions did not yet merit such an award. Many commentators concluded that the award was in recognition of Obama's promise rather than his achievements. END SUMMARY.

Positive

¶2. Centrist vernacular daily RAJDHANI (Oct 11) ran an editorial titled "NOBEL PEACE PRIZE" that commended Obama for his efforts to establish good relations with the international community and his remarks on world peace, destruction of atomic weapons, and nuclear non-proliferation. Translated excerpts:

¶3. "... He [Obama] started an effort to establish cordial relations with the international community that had been given second-class treatment by George Bush. However, his leadership is under the scanner vis--vis the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and the relations with Iran that he inherited from Bush and other predecessors. ... It is natural for the Muslim world and other countries to expect a positive change from somebody who was able to influence the American 'mindset' in favor of change. However, promises, expectations, and their fulfillment are different matters. ... He has made commendable remarks on world peace, destruction of atomic weapons, and nuclear non-proliferation. But along with that, America carries the image of an intervening imperialist. It has forced itself and its allies into untoward wars, affecting world peace and independence. Before this image is erased or before a meaningful evaluation is done in this regard, if the chief executive wins the worlds' most important recognition or prize, then it would continue to be an issue of debate in the days to come."

¶4. "... Maybe the Nobel Committee wants to keep itself in a moral capacity in favor of change and peace in the world. A hasty decision can sometimes bring the wrong result. But Obama has himself addressed this skepticism. May the prize be an inspiration for him. Unshaken continuity of his campaign, improved worldview of America, efforts to

win respect and trust of the Third World, and American assistance to the wars against hunger, disease, and poverty should be the yardsticks [of success] for 'Nobel Laureate' Obama. Debate continues as to whether or not he deserved the recognition. And Obama knows it. That is the best part of it."

15. Independent English daily REPUBLICA (Oct 12) published a letter to the editor titled "NOBLE OBAMA", by a Nepali reader: "I am happy that Barack Obama, the US president, was the recipient of Nobel peace prize this year. He certainly deserves the honor because Obama is a man of character and talent, who wants to advance peace throughout the world."

Skeptical

16. Independent vernacular daily NAGARIK (October 11) ran an opinion piece by its OP-ED editor titled "PRIZE IN ADVANCE." The piece was skeptical of the award decision.

Translated excerpts:

17. "... All these (international diplomacy and remarkable efforts in enhancing community-level assistance, work on making a nuclear-free world, the emphasis on 'multilateral dialogues', efforts to develop understanding with Muslim community, efforts

to make climate change a global agenda under United Nations) are definitely praiseworthy and important issues. Still, the prize seems to be given in haste. Obama did 'great work' by deciding to withdraw troops from Iraq. ... Obama's commitment toward peace will be tested by his decision on Afghanistan. Afghanistan is an issue that could not have brought him the prize."

18. "The Nobel Committee's decision to award Obama appears to be influenced by his leaning toward European viewpoints rather than his contribution to world peace. Non-liberal Americans, especially Republicans, consider the world to be 'uni-polar' under American leadership after the end of Cold War. Europeans including Russia, Germany, and France had found it hard to accept the American hegemonic claim. Obama has calmed this dispute by promoting the United Nations. Maybe the fulfillment of the European 'ego' is another cause for the prize selection. Besides, is it possible that the prize decision came to 'erase' the blames of 'racism'?"

19. "It is not that Obama has done nothing. He has given hope with his special effort to bring international diplomacy in favor of and closer to people. Obama has contributed in directing the G-20 leaders, who used to forsake the greater interest of the world for the sake of national interests, toward a new path of consensus and dialogue. Obama's effort to reinvigorate the fading and waning United Nations is also praiseworthy. But these were not enough to bring him the prize. Therefore, this prize appears not to be in recognition of his achievements, but in an effort to encourage his potential. To keep the dignity of the Nobel Peace Prize, Obama faces the additional challenge of strongly advancing his agenda of developing world peace and understanding."

110. Centrist English daily THE KATHMANDU POST (Oct 12) ran an opinion piece by its former editor Shyam KC, titled "OH OBAMA" that argued Obama did not deserve the prize so soon after assuming office.

Excerpts:

¶11. "... The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize this year to U.S. President Barack Obama has predictably raked up controversy as never before. ... Obama is the first black president of the world's most powerful country. But is that a qualification for a Nobel Prize? And if so, the U.S. Democratic Party that nominated him and the people who voted for him deserve the kudos more than he does."

¶12. "... The domination of Europe and the United States in the share of the Nobel Peace Prize is all too clear, and bespeaks of the political considerations rather than actual merit that go into the selection process. Great figures like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) were bypassed. In 1991, the prize was awarded to Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar (Burma), one of the very few Asians to be so honored. And this gave rise to a lot of questions here in Nepal as to why she should have been awarded the prize when our own Ganesh Man Singh was in no way an inferior choice, having made more sacrifices than she did, and having brought down in 1990 the Panchayat system seemingly so firmly entrenched. Surely political considerations rather than actual achievements were the key considerations of the Nobel Peace Prize committee then as now."

¶13. "... It is no surprise that the present choice should meet with controversy. I am personally an admirer of the present U.S. president, but think that he did not deserve the prize so soon after assuming office and without bringing about substantial, meaningful and sustainable changes in global politics and matters relating to global ecology and climate change. But oh to be Obama. Words rather than deeds are enough."

¶14. Centrist English daily THE KATHMANDU POST

published a letter to the editor, titled "OBAMA'S NOBEL" by a Nepali writer: "... The peace prize should go to someone who has done something to make the world a more hospitable place. Obama promises plenty, but talk is easy, it's action that counts. Isn't it paradoxical that the Nobel for peace is going to the leader of the country whose troops have been responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan? Also, we don't see any concrete steps by the U.S. to combat climate change even while it is the biggest energy consumer in the world. I doubt the peace prize will change the U.S. outlook on the rest of the world."

MOON